United Nations E/CN.6/2005/NGO/34

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
3 February 2005

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Forty-ninth session
28 February-11 March 2005
Item 3 (c) (ii) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: current challenges and forward-looking strategies for the advancement and empowerment of women and girls

Statement presented by World Vision International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2005/1.

05-22857 (E) 040305

Statement

In 2005 the United Nations will be reviewing the progress made and implementation of important outcomes of conferences such as the Fourth World Congress on Women (Beijing, 1995) and the UN Millennium Summit (2000). The Beijing Platform for Action outlined 12 Critical Areas required for women's empowerment and fulfilment of their rights. Furthermore, Goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) deals with promoting gender equality and empowering women, with the target being to *eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education no later than 2015*.

It can be argued that all the eight MDGs should be viewed using a gender lens since issues such as poverty and hunger; universal primary education; child mortality; maternal health; HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; environmental sustainability; and global partnerships disproportionately affect girls and women.

In fact, when comparing the 12 Critical Areas of the Beijing Platform for Action with the MDGs, the overlap on the issues is staggering.

World Vision's recent publication entitled *Empowering Women and Girls: Challenges & Strategies in Gender Equality* clearly outlines four current challenges facing women and girls, namely HIV/AIDS, violence, armed conflict and trafficking. Violence against women and girls occurs in the home, school and community in the form of neglect, infanticide, prenatal selection, harmful traditional practices such as FGM and sexual exploitation. Unfortunately, too often the perpetrator is a family member who is supposed to nurture and protect. According to UNAIDS, up to 50 per cent of those who report physical abuse report that the perpetrator was an intimate partner.[1] About one in three women has been beaten, coerced into sex or abused during her lifetime, while 40-58 per cent of assaults are against girls who are under 15 years old.[2] World Vision welcomes the progress of the *Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children*, which indicates that there have been or will be national, regional and international consultations addressing violence in the home, school and community.

HIV/AIDS continues to ravage the lives of women and girls, who in most areas are infected and affected disproportionately to men. UNICEF's report, *The State of the World's Children, 2005* reports the startling figure that women aged 15-24 in sub-Saharan Africa make up 75 per cent of the infected population.[3] Stigmatisation and ostracism continue to be major challenges. According to UNAIDS/WHO *AIDS Epidemic Update of December 2004*, 17.6 million women (15-49 years old) are living with HIV/AIDS. UNICEF, UNAIDS and WHO statistics show that young women (15-24 years) comprise 62 per cent of the young people living with HIV/AIDS.[4] World Vision has committed resources, technical expertise and put strategies in place through it's innovative *Hope Initiative*, which has three principal components: prevention, care and support, and advocacy. *World Vision*

[1] http://www.unaids.org/html/pub/topics/gender/genderbasedviolence_en_pdf.pdf

[2] http://www.womensedge.org/pages/referencematerials/reference_material.jsp?id=67

[3] http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/SOWC_2005_(English).pdf

[4] http://www.unfpa.org/adolescents/facts.htm

invests $200 million a year in the 30 worst hit countries by HIV/AIDS.[5] Other major health issues that require urgent attention are the need to reduce maternal and child mortality rates and malaria, which accounts for nearly 50 per cent of causes of death in sub-Saharan Africa.

World Vision is concerned and continues to address the trafficking of women and girls. Psychological, emotional and physical damage occurs especially to young girls who are trafficked into sexual exploitation. World Vision has been instrumental in collaborating with government law enforcement agencies to put laws, policies and structures in place to prosecute those who traffic women and girls. Capacity-building of the police and cooperation through transnational agreements has been effective, yet more needs to be done to curtail the trafficking of women and girls. The International Organisation for Migration estimates that between 700,000 to 2 million women are trafficked across international borders annually.[6] World Vision acknowledges the creation of the mandate of a United Nations Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, especially women and children at the sixtieth session of the Commission on Human Rights, and looks forward to collaborating with the Special Rapporteur.

Armed conflict exposes girls, and women to gender-based violence, torture, killing, maiming, abduction and other egregious crimes against humanity. They have been forced to leave their home and land to reside in either IDP or refugee camps. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates there are 21.4 million refugees, while women and children comprise 80 per cent of the world's refugees.[7] World Vision has pioneered the *Do No Harm and Local Capacities for Peace* initiative Framework. *The framework provides a method of analysis that assists NGOs toward achieving the goal of doing no harm while providing aid and helping NGOs to recognize and support the people's local capacities for peace.*[8]

Furthermore, World Vision makes the following recommendations[9] to the Governments, NGOs and United Nations agencies involved in the forty-ninth session of the CSW:

1. Learn from, duplicate and provide resources for a three-pronged approach to addressing HIV/AIDS

   a. *Prevention — targeting children 5-15 years of age, high-risk groups, pregnant and lactating mothers*

   b. *Care and support — for orphans and vulnerable children (including their parents and care-givers) and PLWHA in a community*

[5] Casey K, Amayun MB, 2002, *World Vision's hope initiative: A global NGO responds to a global crisis*, 14th International AIDS Conference, Barcelona, Spain July 7-12 2002.

[6] IOM Quarterly Bulletin, No. 23, 2001, http://www.unfpa.org/upload/lib_pub_file/266_filename_Trafficking.pdf

[7] http://www.unfpa.org/intercenter/beijing/armed.htm

[8] World Vision CEO Briefing Number 44, Local Capacities for Peace (LCP) Bill Lowrey, Coordinator for Reconciliation and Peacebuilding.

[9] Further details on recommendations are available from: World Vision International, Empowering Women and Girls: Challenges and Strategies in Gender Equality, 2005, www.globalempowerment.org.

e. Advocacy — for policies and programs that will minimize HIV/AIDS transmission and provide maximum care for all affected by HIV/AIDS

2. Actively address the issue of domestic violence, both in relation to international legislation and policies, and provide incentives and resources to research and set up databases for sufficient mapping of the problem as well as programmatic interventions

3. Ensure international, national and regional reinforcement of laws and implementation of policies to address the issue of trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation and put more effective mechanisms to punish traffickers and exploiters, whilst protecting victims through appropriate immigration laws and policies

4. Address the feminization of poverty and its relation to violence against women and girls through institutional mechanisms, provision of resources, technical expertise and local initiatives

5. Address the root causes of female infanticide and foeticide that has lead to the death of millions of girls; and implement policies and measures that rectify the low status of women and girls in patriarchal societies

6. Grant sufficient budgets to the Government ministry or department responsible for gender and children which in some countries receives the smallest budget in comparison to other ministries; as well as support organizations working directly or in collaboration with communities on women's and girls issues

7. Determine feasible mechanisms, enforcement measures and implementation of policies to address the impunity of violators of women's and girl's rights especially in situations of armed conflict

8. Involve women in decision-making during peace negotiations and the political process at the national, regional and international levels which is crucial for the protection of women and girls from violence and other violations of their rights

9. Collaborate and coordinate with religious leaders, faith-based organizations (FBOs), local NGOs and men in designing the action plans and strategies, as well as long-term implementation, in order to combat violence against women and children; child trafficking; peaceful solutions to armed conflicts and prevention, care, support and advocacy for those affected and infected by HIV/AIDS

10. Aim to eradicate harmful traditional practices against women and girls such as female infanticide and female genital mutilation (in the case of FGM provide alternative rites of passage which embrace positive cultural coming of age ceremonies without the mutilation of the girl child)

11. Support women and girls with educational opportunities, information and knowledge critical to understanding their rights and having the autonomy to demand those rights; for instance, this could include insuring that both primary and secondary education is accessible and of good quality for boys and girls through the provision of incentives to encourage parents to send their children to school, such as scholarships and a safe environment